

JOURNAL

OF THE

ASIATIC SOCIETY.



Part I.—HISTORY, LITERATURE, &c.

No. I.—1874.

On the Ruins at Dímapúr on the Dunsirí River, Ásám.—By MAJOR H. H. GODWIN-AUSTEN, F. R. G. S., F. Z. S., &c., Deputy Superintendent, Topographical Survey of India.

(With two photocollotypes, three photozincographs, and one lithograph.)

The ruins at Dímapúr on the Dunsirí, 45 miles South of Golághát are exceedingly interesting. They have been known and visited by the comparatively few Europeans who have passed through this part of Ásám, but I do not think any notice has been taken of them, save by Major (now Colonel) J. Butler in his book 'Travels and Adventures in Assam', where two drawings are to be found of the entrance gateway and the ruins near, with a short account of the place (*vide* Appendix A). On our return at the end of April from field work in the Nágá Hills, we halted two days at Dímapúr, to make an examination of the place. Of the history of the city I was unable to obtain any information, and no native of the present place can tell one anything reliable. There seems, however, to be a general belief that the town was founded and built by a Kachhári Rájá, and destroyed by the Nágás from the south. Not having seen elsewhere buildings or sculpture bearing any resemblance to those at Dímapúr, I made a plan of the ruins, with the assistance of Mr. M. T. Ogle of the Topographical Survey Department, and he with Captain J. Butler, son of the above mentioned Col. Butler and Political Agent, Nágá Hills, made on the following day the circuit of the N. W. side facing the outer wall of the town. I have thus been able to give a very fair plan of the whole place. The unpleasantness of this work can be imagined: the dense underwood with the constant showers then

occurring was dripping wet, leeches swarmed, as well as several species of gaddy, and the air was close and smelled with decaying vegetation. The place is a favourite lair for tigers, who find the old, wet, grassy tanks pleasant spots in the heat of the day, and Captain Butler had not long previously lost a grass-cutter who was carried off, while grass was being loaded on the elephants. The plans, with drawings of the pillars, and more detailed examples of the style of sculpture will, I hope, prove of interest to the members of the Asiatic Society, and perhaps lead to a notice of other similar remains in the Ásám valley, with the history pertaining to them.

A general account here of Dímápúr will better convey an idea of the present position of the ruins, before I notice them in detail and shew how great a change has come over the place, since the days when we must imagine it a large and prosperous town, extending with its tanks over nearly two square miles of ground. The present position of Dímápúr is on the right bank of the Dunsirí, where we have a stockade and a few men of the Nágá Hills Police Force. There are a few houses round about it, and owing to the greater security our late occupancy has brought about, the place is gradually increasing in size. The soil in the vicinity is rich, and traces of former cultivation are still to be made out near the large tanks, but are now all overgrown with forest; it is this portion which the Mikirs and others of Dímápúr are now clearing and taking up again. With the exception of these small and recent clearances, all else, the ruins included, is covered with primeval forest larger and denser on the left bank perhaps than the right. The latter is higher than the former near the site of the stockade, and is about 25 feet high, of strong sandy clays. To the east of the stockade is the first tank, about 270 yards square, with a fine broad solid embankment about 25 yards at top, sloping gradually outwards, steeper slightly on the inner side. On the top of the embankment, Captain Butler has built a fine timber bungalow, overlooking the water, a very pretty site, with the distant Nágá hills shewing on a clear day above the great forest trees of the opposite side. A second tank is passed a short distance south on the road to Sámágúting, and is perhaps a little larger in extent; others, Captain Butler informed me, he had seen in the vicinity. Our time did not admit of looking them up, and it is tedious work forcing a way with elephants into the dense jungle, and takes a long time. The old town is situated on the left bank, the lowest. It was bounded on the north by a brick wall, 900 yards long; on the south, by the Dunsirí; the western wall was followed for 950 yards from the N. W. angle, but must be quite 1400 yards up to the river; the eastern wall is 700 yards long, with an obtuse salient angle; the fine solid brick gateway (still standing) is situated on this side, 150 yards from the N. E. angle. The sculpture and stone ruins are about the same distance on the left, after passing through the entrance arch. Numerous small tanks

occur within the walls, now for the most part silted up and overgrown with tall grasses. To explore the place thoroughly would take several days, and would no doubt bring to light other pillars and remains besides those we saw. Broken bricks were observed by me near tank No. 2 (*vide* plan), and it was said that the eastern wall is to be traced south of the river, but statements regarding this differed, and I do not think it does so. But it is a point worth clearing up by any one who may have the time and opportunity.

Dímapúr now stands in a country one might well call uninhabited. The nearest villages in the low country are Mohungdijua, 18 miles N. W., and Borpathar, 28 miles north; the Nágá village of Sámágúting on the first low range is 11 miles distant. To what it owed its former size and importance is difficult to say, excepting we suppose that relations with the hill people on the south were of a different nature in those days. It is quite possible that the hills were then in the occupation of the Kaehhári race. If such were the case, Dímapúr would have been an important place, up to which the Dunsiri is navigable nearly all the year round, connecting it with the large walled town, the remains of which are to be seen at Numaligarh on the same river.

The entrance gateway is a fine solid mass of masonry, with a pointed arch; the stones which are pierced to receive the hinges of double heavy doors, are still in perfect preservation. It is flanked on both sides by octagonal turrets of solid brick work, and the intervening distance to the central archway is relieved by false windows of ornamental moulded brick work. It is curious that no advantage has been taken of the thickness of the walls to construct chambers in it. The building is still in good preservation, but has evidently been shaken on occasion by earthquakes. There is an appearance about the architecture as if Muhammadan artisans had been employed on its construction. All the ornamentation is simple scroll, not a single representation of any bird or beast. Neither is there anything in keeping with the sculptured stones of the ruin adjacent, some on either side of the archway, where the circular rose pattern occurs, of which I have given a drawing. The wall of the places adjacent to the gateway on either side appears to have been higher than the other portion, but its average height now is not more than 6 to 8 feet, having fallen everywhere, and in some places shews only as a bank, the bricks being buried in the vegetable mould of years. The bricks are of all sizes and of flat form, common to all the old brick work that I have met with in Ásám and Bhútan Duárs. However, at Dímapúr, no brick is exactly of the same size. They appear to have been made by pressing the clay between boards to about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in thickness, and then cutting it in squares, no two sides of which were truly parallel. The courses were very neatly laid, and the mortar was very white and good. Some of the bricks had been very

sharply cut into angles and edges for the cornice work. All the moulded bricks were of very fine clay and well burnt. The clay in the neighbourhood is of a superior kind.

Turning sharp to the left from the gateway, we followed the wall on the outside for about 200 yards, and then turning in through a gap in it, came at about 80 yards on the site of the ruins at their northern end. It is a peculiarly striking place, unlike anything I have seen in India, nor have I ever seen mention elsewhere of ruins like these. When perfect, it must have been an imposing looking place; even now buried as it lies, in the dense gloomy forest, it excites wonder and admiration for the labour expended in transporting such massive blocks of sandstone so far. The nearest point, at which the tertiary sandstone could have been quarried, would be upon the first line of hills, some 10 miles distant, while up the Dunsirí valley it would be much farther: and if they were brought from this side, it is not improbable that rafts might have been employed to bring the stone a part of the distance. It is not easy at first to make out the plan of the place owing to the underwood, but our Khási coolies soon cleared paths about the place and opened it up.

The carved pillars, the most distinguishing feature of the ruins, are arranged in two rows in front of what must have been a long sort of corridor. Whether this was enclosed in any way, or divided into compartments by walls, is impossible to say, neither is it quite easy to understand the manner in which it was roofed, though in my drawing it is shewn how I imagine this was done. The highest pillars and highest portion of the covered part or corridor are in the centre and diminish on either side; the pillars at the southern end are certainly older, ruder, and of coarser make than those in the centre or north, and the distance between the two rows of pillars is narrower at the south end. The pillars are all of one general pattern, and remind one much of gigantic chessmen. What they are intended to represent is difficult to say; some would perhaps set them down as a form of lingas; but may not their origin be sought for in the very widely spread custom in this quarter of India of erecting rough stone monuments, and may not the custom have taken the form of these carved pillars, brought into their present position with such enormous expenditure of labour by a population, lowlanders, richer and more civilized than their mountain neighbours, but with whose customs and superstitions they assimilated. The tallest pillar is about 15 feet; the smallest at the south end, 8 feet 5 inches; a great number, 12 to 13 feet. The diameter of one of the largest was 6 feet. No two are precisely alike in the minor ornamentation, but all are of one general form, large semi-circular tops with concentric foliated carving below on the shaft. There is seen (*vide* Pl. V, bottom) what may possibly be intended for a spear head; if it be such, it is the only object represented. However

in the V-shaped supports of the corridor, animate objects (*vide* Pl. VI) are introduced, and the elephant, deer, dog, duck, peacock and polyplectron or pea pheasant can be made out; but, worthy of remark, not a single human form not even a head. The lotus is evident in all the carved work, and there is a general primitiveness of design which is very apparent. The simple circle within circle, more or less elaborated, is the distinguishing type of the sculptured work. The only instance of carving I know on the monoliths of the Khásí Hills, is this simple circle with petaliform pattern. The old temple at Nimaligarh has such a circle carved on the huge slab that once roofed the single centre chamber, but in other respects there is no similarity of design. The scroll patterns of Nimaligarh shew an advanced style of Hindu art, are very intricate and laid out with mathematical exactness, and the figures are nearly all men and women, most obscene in their character, all cut in the hard granite of the Mikir Hills. I regret that my time was too limited, to make a plan of this temple, which when perfect must have been a very striking and well proportioned edifice. Even as it was, for the short look at the place, I am indebted to the courtesy of the acting manager of the tea plantation close by, who kindly lent an elephant, and went out to the ruin with me.

The V-shaped supports or pillars are unique, at least to me, and from measurements of the broken portions appear to have been longer armed on one side than the other, and those in the front row a little taller than those at the back. This was no doubt to carry the roof in a regular slope outwards and to the rear. A mortice has been cut on the top surface of each arm, and probably carried a connecting piece from one V to the other. This was probably of stone, from the size of the mortice. I could not find any block that corresponded with such. There is no doubt that stones have been removed. It is perhaps questionable whether this was a temple at all. I am inclined to think that it was the site of a great market place or "Nath," from its position first inside the gateway, and also from the general appearance of the place. The covered corridor would have very much the appearance of the long-roofed sheds, run up in many paths during the rains in this part of India (where bamboo and thatching grass are plentiful and close at hand), the roofs slightly sloping to the back. If the temple were Hindu or Buddhist, we should have had the form of some deity introduced somewhere in the sculpture. I think it, therefore, more likely that this was a town of an aboriginal race (old Kachhári?), who would have had a simple demon worship and no idol forms, as we find the case with races of this form of religion at the present day. The idea of a large bazar would very likely enter the minds of a large colony at Dímapúr; and the setting up of the stones would have been carried out at the time, as an act of propitiation or of handing down the memory of its foundation to posterity;

the same reason for which individuals of certain Nágá tribes erect stone monuments at the present day, not 20 miles distant. There was certainly no back or front side to the corridor in the strict sense of the term, for the V-pillars are carved on both faces and on the lower or outside face of the arms. To the west of this edifice, and parallel with it, runs a broad shallow ditch, dry in the cold weather, and on the edge of it, opposite the centre of the corridors, stands a large isolated pillar now much broken, skirting an old tank; and about 150 yards further, another isolated pillar is found, the largest in the place, being 16 feet 8 inches high and 23 feet in circumference. These great solid masses of sandstone (which is very soft when first quarried) must have been brought in and set up in the rough and then carved, or they would have been much damaged in getting them up. In this largest pillar such is evident; the original mass did not admit of its being cut with perfect curve, and here and there the concentric rings of carving follow into the natural and original indentations of surface. The gradual rise of land surface with probable sinking of the stones had hidden the sculptured portions for more than a foot of one examined. Some of the pillars have been brought down by falling trees, but I think an earthquake has had its share; for one of the corner V-supports has been twisted quite out of its original position (*vide* large plan) from west to east, 90 degrees, the weight of the arms of those on either side falling in contrary directions would have aided this. The sketches I have attached to this paper with the drawings of the pillars as they now appear will, I trust, give some idea of the style of architecture of these curious old ruins which are fast disappearing with the rapid growth and damp of the surrounding forest.

On the History of Pegu.—By MAJOR GENERAL SIR ARTHUR P. PHAYRE,
K. C. S. I., C. B.

(Continued from Journal, Part I, for 1873, p. 159.)

Mahá Upa Rádzá, the eldest son of the deceased emperor, burnt the body of his father, on the fifth day after his death, with the funeral ceremonies used for a Tsekya waté (Chakrawartti), or universal monarch. The bones were collected and cast into the river at its mouth. He then declared himself his father's successor, and appointed his own son Mengkyítswá, Upa Rádzá. He is in the Taláing history styled Nanda Bureng. The army which had been sent to Arakan was at once recalled. The king of Siam, Byanarít, came it is said to Hantháwati, and did homage, as did other tributary kings. But the king of Ava, uncle to the Emperor, did not appear, and his daughter, who was married to the Upa Rádzá, complained